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AUTHOR Liebowitz, Steven E.
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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the Pause Model, an innovative means of integrating self-directed learning and continuing professional education. Since the method was developed for professionals such as counselors, educators, and managers who practice in social settings, the paper begins with an explanation of a few of the unique attributes of professional practice in social settings. Because the Pause Model is based on the qualitative paradigm of science, the paper describes the differences between the qualitative paradigm and the traditional quantitative paradigm and explains why the qualitative paradigm is most appropriate for professionals with social practices. A vision of professional practice as a lifelong, self-directed learning project follows. The Pause Model and its benefits are integrated with this vision. The five components of the model are described: (1) the trigger; (2) goal articulation; (3) force field or gap analysis; (4) action; and (5) evaluation. A discussion follows of two of Schon's (1983) concepts that form the basis of the collaborative relationship between the client and practitioner that makes the Pause Model possible: the reflective conversation and the reflective contract. An example of use of the model is given, and the place of the model in contemporary professional practice is described. (YLB)

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The Pause Model: A Qualitative Method of Self-Directed
Continuing Education for Professionals With Social Practices

by Steven E. Liebowitz, Ed.D
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Overview and Introduction

This paper introduces the Pause Model, an innovative means of integrating self-directed learning and continuing professional education. Since the method was developed for professionals such as counselors, educators and managers who practice in social settings, the paper begins with an explanation of a few of the unique attributes of professional practice in social settings.

Then, because the Pause Model is based on the qualitative paradigm of science, the paper describes the differences between the qualitative paradigm and the traditional quantitative paradigm and explains why the qualitative paradigm is most appropriate for professionals with social practices.

A vision of professional practice as a life long, self-directed learning project follows. The Pause Model and its benefits are integrated with this vision; the Pause Model is presented; an example of its use given and the place of the Model in contemporary professional practice is described.

Professional Practice in a Social Context

A professional social practice is one in which the practitioner's goals involve changing human beings. Hasenfeld (1974) explains that in contrast with the inanimate raw material of the traditional business or industrial organization, the raw material being processed and changed in a social practice is human, and comes vested with cultural values and a social and moral identity. Unlike traditional raw materials such as sand, wood, and minerals, the raw materials that social practitioners work with are self-activating entities whose responses are determined not only by what is being done to them, but also by their own desires, motivations attitudes, and past learning. The success of social practitioners is, therefore, influenced by the willingness of their client.

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willingness of their client.

The social practitioner's "raw material" is what Hasenfeld (1974) characterized as a "knowing being" capable of much complex behavior. The knowledge and attributes they possess have important consequences for how their actions are interpreted. Therefore, the locus of control over much so-called intelligent behavior resides initially within the subjects themselves.

Because their raw materials are inanimate objects, traditional organizational exemplars, such as factories and banks are more likely than social practitioners and human service organizations to obtain agreement on their task environment and their output goals. Because their raw material is human, the goals of social practitioners, especially those working in human service organizations such as schools, hospitals, universities and prisons, are primarily commitments to certain values, norms, and ideologies. Since these values and ideologies are, to some extent always controversial, it is frequently difficult for social practitioners and human service organizations to obtain agreement on their task environment and their output goals. Thus, a key characteristic of a social practice is that its goals are ideological in nature, and as such, may be a source of difficulty.

In addition, since each participant, each "bit" of "raw material," is uniquely different, the goals must be stated broadly, problematically, and somewhat ambiguously in order to encompass this wide heterogeneity. As many of each client's personal goals must be addressed and co-opted into the professional's goal definitions. Furthermore, client goals cannot be easily converted to some quantitative, common denominator, or scale.

Processing human raw material requires different technology. By technology Hasenfeld (1974) means the series of procedures designed to transform the raw material from one state to another in a predetermined manner. Technology he says, is based on a body of knowledge that ensures, within certain limits, the success of the transformation process. The level of determinancy of the technology is a function of three major variables: (a) the extent to which the desired outcomes are tangible and well defined, (b) the degree of stability and invariability of the raw material, and (c) the knowledge available and the degree of its completeness about cause-effect relations in the raw material.

Hasenfeld's model means that if a professional educator such as a tenured professor at a university business school was for example, to conduct a management development training program for hospital administrators, the technology is indeterminant because (a) the desired outcome -teaching people how to exercise good judgment - is not tangible nor is it well defined, (b) the raw

materials - experienced supervisory and management personnel - are quite variable, and (c) the knowledge available about cause-effect relations in the "raw material" is incomplete.

Thus, professional social practice is distinctly characterized by the fact that it experiences a high level of uncertainty in the three elements composing its technologies. Difficulties are encountered not only in specifying desired outcomes, but in assessing the transformation process itself. This view means that conducting practice exclusively in accordance with the traditional, quantitative models would be inappropriate. This view suggests that it would be more appropriate to conduct practice in accordance with qualitative models and tools such as the Pause Model and the Reflective Contract that are to be described later in this paper.

The main point is, according to Hasenfeld (1974), that because social practice technology is indeterminate, professionals develop a series of working assumptions about clients that become codified in the technology, even though the factual validity of these assumptions may vary considerably. The Pause Model and reflective contract could help professionals separate the valid assumptions from the invalid assumptions and make the technology more determinant.

Hasenfeld (1974) says that this tendency is particularly the case when the body of knowledge relates to the nonphysical attributes of the persons being processed and changed, as is the case with educators, psychiatrists and counselors. Although the "technological revolution" has increased this body of knowledge, social practitioners and human service organizations still grope in darkness when their task is to change the attributes and behavior of people.

This is due, Hasenfeld (1974) says, not only to the partial and fragmented development of useful quantitative knowledge in this area but also to the problems of translating these abstract and complex principles into actual operating procedures, such as the need to operationalize high motivation among students and workers. In addition, many of these principles or change models assume that the organization can control and neutralize many external variables, which it rarely can.

The Qualitative Paradigm

The quantitative paradigm dominates contemporary scientific research, professional practice and continuing professional education. The quantitative is clearly more appropriate for the study of non-human physical phenomena. But there is another paradigm of science, the qualitative paradigm, which may be more useful to professionals with social practices. The following

discussion compares and contrasts a few of the assumptions underlying the two paradigms and shows that the assumptions underlying the qualitative paradigm more closely parallel the conditions found in social practices.

The quantitative paradigm views reality as a series of permanent entities and steady states, all of which are fragmentable into series of independent subsystems. The fragments are called variables. To understand reality, the quantitative paradigm focuses on discovering variables and describing their relationships, in order to predict their behavior and control it.

Quantitative reality is best understood by highly trained professional researchers and scholars who produce quantitative knowledge in the form of theories. Once the quantitative specialists have separated the variables, they are dealt with a few at a time, in a deliberate and careful manner, usually in a laboratory context, without the "real time" pressure to perform that characterizes the various practice contexts. In this way, the quantitative paradigm converges upon reality, one step at a time.

The qualitative paradigm takes virtually the opposite approach. It perceives reality as fluid, impermanent and transitory, not as permanent and steady. The qualitative paradigm focuses upon the simultaneous, co-existence of multiple realities that exist, like the layers of an onion, within and around one another. Each layer provides a different perspective of reality. No layer can be considered more "real" than any other and no layer has a truly independent existence outside the whole.

For the qualitative paradigm, phenomena do not converge into a single form, a single "reality", but diverge into many forms, or multiple realities. The layers cannot be described or understood in terms of separate independent and dependent variables. Rather, they are intricately interrelated to form a pattern of reality.

It is these patterns that constitute reality and it is they that must be studied, not to predict and control them, but rather to facilitate understanding and choice. Unlike the permanent, steady quantitative reality in which the phenomena of interest converge and can be dealt with in a laboratory context, the phenomena of interest for the qualitative paradigm diverge as they are more fully explored and must be dealt with on a "real time" basis in a field context.

Professional Practice as Self-Directed Learning

If one uses Tough's (1971) definition of a self-directed learning project as a series of related episodes, adding up to at least seven hours. In each episode more than half of a person's total motivation is to gain and retain certain fairly clear knowledge and skill, or to produce some other lasting change in himself (Tough, 1971, p. 6), then professional social practice itself may be viewed as a large scale, life long, self directed learning project.

Cross' (1981) observation that professionals "are among the most active self-directed learners in...society" (p. 193) tends to support this view of professional practice as does Schon's (1983) insight that the two benefits of professional practice are understanding in the immediate situation and preparation for some future situation.

Given this view of professional social practice as a large scale, "macro," self-directed learning project, each individual case, chance encounter or conversation may be seen as an opportunity for the professional to understand the immediate situation and prepare for the future and therefore as a potential, "micro" self directed learning project (SDLP) within the "macro" SDLP that is practice itself.

Since the frequently unexpressed but generally accepted over-arching goal of professional practice in social contexts is to empower clients, it is expected that the SDLPs will contribute to that goal. However, since client empowerment is the justification for practitioner empowerment and practitioners are empowered so that they may empower their clients, the over-arching goal of the macro, practice SDLP and the individual micro SDLPs within it, is to empower both practitioners and clients.

Therefore, practitioners need a method that will enable them to transform the many learning opportunities that comprise daily practice into micro SDLPs that will empower both their clients and themselves.

For such a method to be useful in actual practice situations and have value as a means of continuing professional education, it would have to be scientifically rigorous and easy to use. The Pause Model meets these criteria. Its scientific rigor comes from the qualitative paradigm and its ease of use comes from its involvement of clients and its focus on the actual conditions and contexts of practice.

The Pause Model for Self-Directed Continuing Professional Education

As the name implies, the Pause Model transforms routine practice activities into SDLPs by enabling practitioners and clients to pause in the midst of what they are doing to critically reflect upon how their thoughts and actions are contributing to their empowerment in the immediate situation.

The opportunities to critically reflect provided by the Pause Model may thus be seen as collaborative SDLPs, with practitioners and clients working together to achieve their common goals. If empowerment is defined as enabling clients to take more responsibility for themselves and to have greater self esteem, then the responsibility and esteem associated with collaborating with a practitioner, rather than being a "patient", can be very empowering indeed.

It is because the five step Pause Model is based on the qualitative paradigm of science that the critical reflection and the collaboration and empowerment that it engenders is scientifically rigorous. In fact, the Pause Model itself and the Reflective Contract between clients and practitioners that enables it, are essentially forms of qualitative research.

Qualitative research methods such as the Pause allow researchers to scientifically study and learn from their own thoughts and actions, without having to utilize the intrusive controls, equipment or observers associated with traditional quantitative research. Such seeming lack of control and such traditionally unorthodox subjects as the study of one's own thoughts and actions, do not reduce the scientific rigor of the research because the qualitative paradigm of science's assumptions about Truth, Reality and Science itself are unlike those of the traditional quantitative paradigm. With the qualitative paradigm, professional practitioners are able to do scientific research into their own practices. It enables practitioners to become both researcher and research subject simultaneously.

A model such as the Pause Model based on the qualitative paradigm also enables practitioners to engage their clients in a new and collaborative professional relationship. When both become qualitative researchers, working together they are not only able to generate the data they need to achieve their common goals, but the process itself is empowering. Such collaboration tends to reduce and even eliminate the frequently debilitating status differences between professional and client and may even enable them to function almost as colleagues.

The use of a qualitative research method such as the Pause Model not only enables professional practitioners and their

clients to turn their routine interactions into collaborative SDLPs it also enables them to directly influence not just their own lives but the entire profession and the society which it serves. The knowledge gained simply from the process of pausing itself as well as from the completed collaborative SDLPs will enable professionals:

1. to practice in a more client-centered, ethical way;
2. to engage in what Brookfield (1987) called critical thinking and in what Argyris & Schon (1974) described as "double loop" learning - to understand and, if needed, change, the relationships between their theories in use - what they actually do, their techniques and attitudes, and their espoused theories - what they say they want to do, their personal and professional goals and ethical aspirations;
3. to conduct a large percentage of their own continuing professional education on a routine, ongoing basis;
4. to achieve what Schon (1983) calls the twin benefits of practice - competence here and now, in the present situation, and competence in future situations;
5. to push the "state-of-the-art" of their professions past its contemporary limits and to avoid what Cross (1981) described as "getting caught in yesterday's good ideas."

How are these benefits to be realized? How and when would these SDLPs be conducted? After all, practitioners are busy people, they don't have time to dedicate to research and SDLPs.

Self-directed research projects are a natural part of every practitioners' daily routine. Whenever something unexpected occurs, it is natural to pause and reflect on it. The Pause Model simply builds on to that routine research, adding a few aspects of the qualitative paradigm to make the results of those routine pauses a bit more scientific and therefore a bit more useful.

The Components of the Pause Model

There are five components or five steps in the research process that practitioners would follow when using the Pause Model.

1. The "trigger" - something to start or trigger the pause. This would entail some kind of surprise, puzzle, or confusion; contradiction, discrepancy, or unanticipated, unexpected phenomenon.

2. **Goal articulation** - practitioners and clients identify the best possible outcomes consistent with their values. This is what Schon (1983) called articulating the "desirable future" and what Argyris & Schon (1974) called stating one's "espoused theories."

3. **Force field or gap analysis** - practitioners and clients identify the gap between the actual and desired states of affairs, specifying the forces driving towards or restraining the "desirable future."

4. **Action** - what Schon (1983) called "experiments in action" or "hypothesis testing," practitioners and clients commit resources to close the gap and achieve the goal by weakening restraining forces, strengthening driving forces, or both.

5. **Evaluation** - practitioners and clients determine how much of the "desirable future" the hypotheses was able to bring about and what should be done next.

The Reflective Conversation and Contract

The Pause Model for professional self-directed learning embodies a collaborative relationship between the client and practitioner that is very different from the traditional professional relationship with the client passive and the "burden of proof" with the professional.

The collaborative relationship that makes the Pause Model possible is based on two of Schon's (1983) concepts: the reflective conversation and the reflective contract. These concepts recognize that professional expertise is a way of looking at something which was once constructed and may be reconstructed. It is not therefore, the "truth" as the quantitative paradigm defines "truth".

Because of this, practitioners are ready to explore the meaning of their expertise in the experience of the client. Practitioners using the Pause Model accept that although they should be credentialed and technically competent, their claim to authority is essentially based on their ability to manifest their special knowledge through their interactions with clients. Schon (1983) explains it this way:

The practitioner's relation with his client takes the form of a literally reflective conversation. Here the professional recognizes that his expertise is embedded in a context of meanings. He attributes to his clients, as well as to himself, a capacity to mean, know, and plan. He recognizes that his actions may have different meanings for his client than he intends them to have, and he gives himself the task of

discovering what these are. He recognizes an obligation to make his own understandings accessible to his client, which means that he needs often to reflect anew on what he knows (Schon, 1983, p.295).

Since, as the qualitative paradigm suggests, both client and professional bring to their encounter a tacit, non-logical framework of understandings which they can only very partially communicate to one another and much of which they cannot describe even to themselves, the process of communication which is supposed to lead to a full exchange of meanings can only begin with "non understanding and non acceptance." For the reflective contract to work, both parties must start with, "a willing suspension of disbelief."

Thus, clients in a reflective contract do not agree to accept the practitioner's authority but to "suspend disbelief in it." They agree to join the practitioner in inquiring into the situation for which help is sought to try to understand what is being experienced and to make that understanding accessible to practitioners, to confront practitioners when they do not understand or agree, to test the practitioners' competence by observing effectiveness and to make public their questions over what would be counted as effectiveness.

For their part of the reflective contract, practitioners agree to help clients understand the meaning of their advice and the rationale for their actions, while at the same time learning what meanings their actions have for clients; to make themselves readily confrontable by clients; and to reflect on their own tacit understandings. Within such a contract, professionals are more directly accountable to clients than in the traditional contract.

Schon (1983) says that behavior in the traditional contract "tends to take the form of win/lose games of control. It is not enough for one party to decide, unilaterally, that he will no longer be a party to such win/lose games. He must also work toward creation of conditions in the behavioral world which will increase the likelihood that the other party will make a similar decision..." (p.303).

Professionals may begin to go from the traditional contract to the reflective contract by voicing the dilemma they feel, stating, for example, that they want, on the one hand, to convey to clients their evolving understanding of the situation, but that, on the other hand, they are concerned about the risk of frightening or confusing clients. In doing this, they make it easier for clients to admit that they too, might be frightened or confused by such an initiative; and they model a way of acting that will help clients to surface dilemmas or negative feelings which they are experiencing.

It is not possible to "leap" from the old to the new contract. Expectations are not easily transformed, Schon (1983) says, especially in the situations of stress and anxiety that characterized many professional-client interactions. Also, the move from old to new is difficult because the competencies for reflective conversation are not acquired simply as a result of deciding to do so.

Schon (1983) sees "shifts" rather than "leaps" occurring, and these will proceed gradually and with difficulty as professionals and clients increase their willingness to experiment with new modes of interaction, increase their competence with the new behaviors; and begin to experience the satisfactions which flow from the new relationships.

However, some of the conditions favorable to the reflective contract are already present, Schon (1983) says. There are clients ready, frustrated at the unwillingness of professionals to abandon the traditional relationships. And there are professionals equally frustrated at being unable to find clients who do not expect and demand the old mystique. "In these sorts of cases it may take very little to set the process of change in motion" (Schon, 1983, p.298). However, because of the difficulties in establishing a reflective contract, "the matter at hand must seem of sufficient importance to make the effort worthwhile" (Schon, 1983, p.298).

An Example of the Pause Model in Action

The following is an example of how a training professional in a large bureaucratic organization might conduct a micro SDLP using the Pause Model:

The trainer is wondering about whether or not, or to what extent, he has had a particular impact, "X", on a learner. The "X" impact was to be one of the results of a management development training program intended to bring about a desirable future, specifically, the empowerment of the learner.

In the course of program development and implementation, the trainer took specific actions to produce "X". The practitioner pauses and critically reflects on "X" and the actions taken to achieve it hoping both were congruent and effective. But given the ambiguous, "messy" nature of the contemporary practice situation he can't be sure.

In other words, his "puzzlement" about "X" triggers his pause to critically reflect about whether "X" did in fact occur (gap analysis); if its occurrence was in fact desirable (value articulation), and finally, what particular program development and implementation related phenomena contributed to "X" (both gap analysis and value articulation).

If the goal articulation and gap analysis part of the reflective process confirm that "X" occurred and had a beneficial impact upon the learner, that it occurred without significant side effect, and that the actions taken to achieve "X" were indeed contributory and congruent, then the Pause is over.

If however, the trainer finds any variation, such as no "X", or partial "X", or "X" with "Y" side effect, and/or lack of congruence or usefulness, then the Pause and its experimentation would broaden and deepen.

The Pause Model as an Alternative

Although it is possible, even desirable, to believe that qualitative models such as the Pause to critically reflect can be full fledged, qualitative, comprehensive alternatives to the quantitative, traditional model of continuing professional education, the Pause Model described here has not been designed to replace the traditional forms of continuing professional education. Rather, it is intended to be an adjunct to them, to be used with them.

The Pause Model for collaborative SDLPs and continuing professional education described in this paper is a bridging model meant to connect the two paradigms, a synthesis intended to compensate for the limitations of the quantitative approach and provide professionals with the best of both paradigms. The Pause is meant to extend the currently dominant model of continuing professional education beyond its traditional quantitative base to include the qualitative aspects as well.

The Pause Model is intended to facilitate "both/and" movement and avoid an either/or choice. It is designed to surface the tacitly accepted quantitative assumptions at the heart of contemporary professional practice and continuing professional education, and then synthesize both the quantitative and the qualitative to transform professional practice and continuing professional education.

At this time in the history and evolution of professional practice, and given that the quantitative model is so ingrained and dominant, a forced, "either/or" choice between a qualitative practice model or a quantitative practice model, seems wasteful and even impossible to make. This is only the beginning of Kuhn's (1970) famous "paradigm shift." Perhaps at a future point in time, an "either/or" choice may be successfully made.

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